

Congressman Pence appeared on MSNBC to discuss the situation in Iran with the presidential election, and urged President Obama to support the dissidents in Iran. Congressman Pence also announced that he will be introducing a resolution to express support for the dissidents and to condemn the violence against demonstrators.

**Transcript below:**

**Savannah Guthrie:** President Obama is answering questions today about why he has not said more to support protesters in Iran. This afternoon, he held a joint press conference with South Korea's President and responded to that charge.

**President Obama [clip]:** It's not productive, given the history of U.S./Iranian relations to be seen as meddling - the U.S. President meddling in Iranian elections.

**Guthrie:** And with me now is Republican Congressman Mike Pence of Indiana. He's also the House Republican Conference Chairman. Congressman, first of all, you've now heard what the President has said today and yesterday with regard to Iran. I know you had criticized him before for not using stronger rhetoric in support of those Mousavi supporters. Has he gone far enough now? Are you satisfied with what he's said?

**Congressman Mike Pence:** I'm really not, Savannah, and thanks for having me on. Look, the President of the United States can draw the line where he wants, but I'm going to be offering a resolution on the floor of the Congress today that will give the American people, through their elected representatives, an opportunity to be heard in support of the hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Iranians who are risking their liberty and even their lives to stand for free and fair elections, freedom of speech, a free and independent press in their own country. I understand the administration...

**Guthrie:** Didn't the President say all that? Did not the President say all that in his availability with the Italian Prime Minister yesterday?

**Pence:** Well, I think the President, you know, said that he was deeply troubled by the violence. I think he said that the dissenters had a right to be heard, but I think it's important that the United States of America not take the position that I think you just heard Mr. Gibbs express, that we not meddle in the internal affairs of a country where the cause of freedom and free elections and a free and independent press is in the crosshairs. You have hundreds of thousands of people that are taking to the streets of Iran. And up to this point, they have not received the unqualified affirmation of the most powerful free nation in the history of the world. I think it's important that Congress say "we affirm the right of the dissidents to step forward. We affirm them seeking freedom of expression and free and fair elections." I'm hoping that the American people will be able to be heard on an American stage, even if the administration is taking a more measured approach.

**Guthrie:** Sir, let me follow up on that issue. You're saying that, obviously, the Obama administration has said it doesn't want to meddle in internal politics. Not because it doesn't agree on the substance, but because it's made a tactical decision that it would be unproductive to do so, that it might make it worse, that it might be counter to U.S. interests. You don't think that position has any merits?

**Pence:** Well, no. I just think that in the cause of freedom, America cannot be neutral. Cannot be in the business of making careful, short-term calculations on a diplomatic stage. You know, and remember this, Savannah, the cause of engagement and the cause of condemning the kind of tyrannical violence we've seen come from this regime are not mutually exclusive. We remember Ronald Reagan both engaged Soviet leaders at the same time he called them and their gulags an evil empire. We really do believe it's possible for the United States of America to express ourselves about the billy clubbing, the jailing of political dissidents, the silencing of reporters and the media and the extraordinary courageous stand that hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Iranians are making at this very hour. I think that this is an extraordinary opportunity, Savannah, for the people of the United States to express our love for freedom to the people of Iran who are taking this courageous stand. And I think the Congress should take up a resolution to do it.

**Guthrie:** Very quickly, I've heard some make the argument that, in fact, having Ahmadinejad remain in power might ultimately be more beneficial to U.S. interests because it will be easier for the United States to keep that coalition together and to keep a hard line against Iran. What do you make of that argument? I only have a few seconds left.

**Pence:** Well, it seems to me that those kind of cynical, diplomatic calculations have no place here. I believe this is a moment where you're seeing hundreds of thousands of Iranian risking their liberty and their lives to take a stand for free elections and the freedom of speech. And the freedom-loving people of the United States of America ought to seize this moment to get an unambiguous message of support for their courage and their determination. And we'll let the politics and the diplomatic calculations take care of themselves.

**Guthrie:** Congressman Mike Pence, thanks for coming on and sharing your views. We appreciate it.